

Message Text

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CONFIDENTIAL BANGKOK 11901

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TAGS: SNAR, TH, HK

SUBJECT: CHANGES IN THAILAND/HONG KONG NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING

REF: A. HONG KONG 4683 B. BANGKOK 10987

SUMMARY. THE MARKED INCREASE IN NARCOTICS SEIZURES AT HONG KONG'S KAI TAK AIRPORT (REF A) AND A CORRESPONDING INCREASE IN SEIZURES AT BANGKOK'S DON MUANG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, MAY INDICATE GREATER USE OF AIR ROUTES BETWEEN THE TWO CITIES FOR NARCOTICS SMUGGLING. INCREASED SEIZURES AT DONG MUANG, HOWEVER, ARE PROBABLY ALSO THE RESULT OF IMPROVED THAI PERFORMANCE AT THE AIRPORT. END SUMMARY.

1. WE APPRECIATE INFORMATION PROVIDED IN REF A, WHICH CONFIRMS OUR OWN IMPRESSION OF THE TRAFFICKING PATTERN BETWEEN THAILAND AND HONG KONG. WE NOTE WITH SPECIAL INTEREST THE INCREASING SEIZURES SINCE JANUARY AT KAI TAK AIRPORT. WE BELIEVE, ALTHOUGH WE DON'T HAVE SUPPORTING STATISTICS, THAT THERE MAY BE A CORRESPONDING INCREASE IN THE AMOUNTS OF MORPHINE BASE AND HEROIN MOVING THROUGH DON MUANG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT TO HONG KONG AND OTHER DESTINATIONS. WE DO HAVE EVIDENCE THAT MORPHINE BASE IS CONFIDENTIAL

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MOVING THROUGH DON MUANG TO HONG KONG, POSSIBLY IN LARGE

QUANTITIES. FOR EXAMPLE, THAI CUSTOMS ON JANUARY 21 UNCOVERED 13 KILOGRAMS OF "999" BRAND MORPHINE BASE AND ARRESTED A HONG KONG TRAFFICKER WAITING TO BOARD A FLIGHT TO HONG KONG. AN EXAMINATION OF THE TRAFFICKER'S TAIWANESE PASSPORT REVEALED THAT HE HAD MADE 5 TRIPS FROM BANGKOK TO HONG KONG IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS, ALLEGEDLY WITH JEWELRY FOR SALE AT HONG KONG.

2. SINCE THE JANUARY 21 SEIZURE, CUSTOMS AND POLICE OFFICERS AT BANGKOK AIRPORT HAVE UNCOVERED INCREASING AMOUNTS OF DRUGS MOVING THROUGH THE AIRPORT FOR HONG KONG AND OTHER DESTINATIONS. THE FOLLOWING LIST OF DRUGS SEIZED AT THE AIRPORT IS BASED ON AN UNOFFICIAL MISSION CHRONOLOGY OF SEIZURES IN THE FIRST THREE MONTHS OF 1976:

-- ON JANUARY 21, THAI CUSTOMS SEIZED 13 KILOS OF MORPHINE BASE AND ARRESTED ONE TAIWANESE. DESTINED FOR HONG KONG.

-- ON MARCH 12, THAI CUSTOMS SEIZED 2 KILOS OF NO. 3 HEROIN AND ARRESTED TWO SINO-THAIS AT THE AIRPORT. DESTINATION PARIS.

-- ON MARCH 15, THAI CUSTOMS SEIZED 1,000 "BUDDHA STICKS" OF MARIHUANA AND ARRESTED TWO GERMANS. DESTINATION GERMANY.

-- ON MARCH 16, THAI CUSTOMS SEIZED 2,000 "BUDDHA STICKS" AND ARRESTED ONE CEYLONSE NATIONAL. DESTINATION TOKYO.

-- ON MARCH 16, THAI POLICE SEIZED 910 GRAMS OF NO. 4 HEROIN AND 1,800 GRAMS OF NO. 3 HEROIN AND ARRESTED FOUR SUSPECTS (AN ENGLISHMAN, TWO CHINESE AND ONE THAI). DESTINATION PARIS.

-- ON MARCH 21, THAI CUSTOMS SEIZED 9.8 KILOS OF NO. 3 HEROIN, DESTINED FOR COPENHAGEN. THREE THAI CARRIERS ESCAPED.

-- ON MARCH 24, THAI CUSTOMS ARRESTED AN AUSTRALIAN WITH 58 GRAMS OF HEROIN NO. 4 AND 70 GRAMS OF HASHISH OIL.

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-- ON MARCH 25, THAI CUSTOMS UNCOVERED 25 KILOS OF MARIHUANA IN A SUITCASE GOING TO THE MARSHALL ISLANDS.

-- ON MARCH 26, THAI POLICE SEIZED 22 KILOS OF MARIHUANA IN LUGGAGE DESTINED FOR MAJURO ISLAND IN THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS.

-- ON APRIL 17, THAI POLICE AND CUSTOMS ARRESTED FOUR

JAPANESE AND SEIZED 1.4 KILOS OF NO. 4 HEROIN, BOUND FOR TOKYO.

3. THESE SEIZURES HAVE ONLY SCRATCHED THE SURFACE OF WHAT WE BELIEVE IS A LARGE SCALE MOVEMENT OF DRUGS THROUGH THE AIRPORT. IT IS DIFFICULT, HOWEVER, TO TELL FROM THE PARTIAL EVIDENCE AVAILABLE WHETHER INCREASED SEIZURES AT DONG MUANG ARE THE RESULT OF GREATER USE OF THE AIRPORT BY TRAFFICKERS OR AN IMPROVED ENFORCEMENT EFFORT ON THE PART OF THE THAI. WE SUSPECT IT MAY BE MORE OF THE LATTER AND ARE WORKING TO IMPROVE THAI PERFORMANCE FURTHER. FOR EXAMPLE, TWO DEA SPECIAL AGENTS ARE NOW ASSIGNED TO FULL-TIME LIAISON DUTY AT THE AIRPORT. WE ARE ALSO PRESSING FOR THE REGULAR USE OF NARCOTICS DETECTOR DOGS AT THE AIRPORT. HOPEFULLY, AS ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS CONTINUE TO IMPROVE AT DON MUANG, THE EFFECT MAY BE INCREASINGLY EVIDENT AT KAI TAK AND OTHER AIRPORTS USED BY THE TRAFFICKERS.

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